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SOLID FOR CASH.

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HOW THE BOSSSES OF BOTH PARTIES
DIVIDE
POLITICS AND PLUNDER.

My Self, My Party, and My Country.

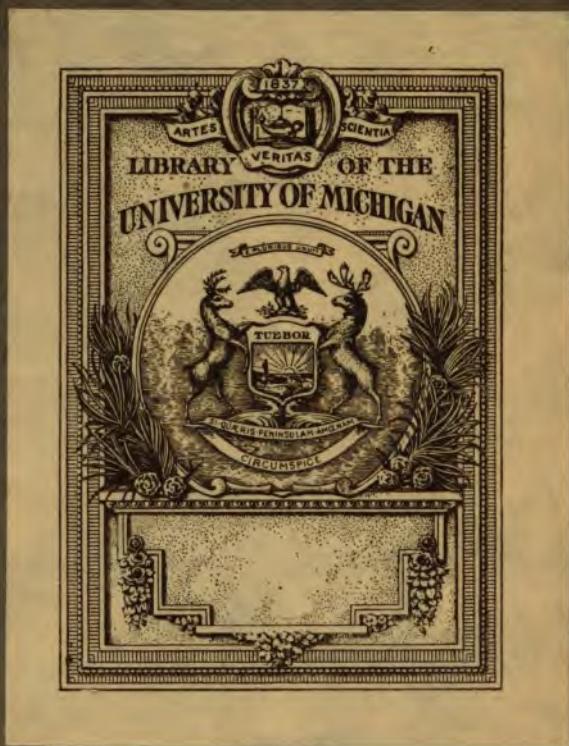
"THE PEOPLE ARE FOOLS."

PHILADELPHIA:

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SOLID FOR CASH.

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(8)



A REFORMER WITHIN THE PARTY.

SOLID FOR CASH.

I.

HE IS BORN.

*Wherein of His Birth, and Sundry Small Matters Anterior
and Posterior Thereto.*

What is the little one thinking about?
Very wonderful things, no doubt;
 Unwritten history!
 Unfathomed mystery!
Yet he chuckles, and crows, and nods, and winks,
As if his head were as full of kinks
And curious riddles as any sphinx.

HE was born. And so was settled a question on which the family to the third and fourth generation (counting upward and downward) had divided into rival and really hostile factions. Aunt Sophie wagged her head ominously, and said it couldn't be.

"Why, Mrs. Wilson, just take a sensible woman's view of it, ma'am. Nature is nature; she'll do some things, and she won't do some others. Now here's a woman expectin' and hopin' soon to be a mother—it ain't no secret, or I wouldn't speak of it to you, ma'am

—and wat does she do? Goes gallavantin' everywhere, and at all times. No harm, to be sure, but very dangerous for a woman in her—you understand, ma'am. Why on'y night afore last she was up at the big fire—wouldn't give her husband no peace till he took her. I tell you, ma'am, there's goin' to be disappointment in this family—mark my words."

Aunt Sophie knew a good deal about such things in an amateurish kind of way, and she flattered herself that she "know'd wat was wat."

Cousin Amelia Snip wondered whether it would be a boy or a girl, but that it would be one or the other she entertained no doubt; for she had dreamed the whole scene straight through three nights in succession.

Mr. Solomon Skinnem, who stood a fair chance to be placed in a very near relationship to "it," said he "didn't believe it was his luck, nohow."

Mrs. Solomon Skinnem, whose reputation was staked on the issue, blushed, and remonstrated with some show of egotism, that they who lived the longest would see the most. For her part, she guessed she knew what she was about.

"And if it's a girl, Mr. Skinnem, maybe she'll marry a French markis; and if he's a boy, he may be President some day."

"—Of a hose company, perhaps, Mrs. Skinnem; if you keep on running to fires. I'm afraid if she don't turn out bad, he'll be no good."

But what was the use of balancing he's and she's? Would it arrive at all? and if so, in what condition? Would it tarry long and have a good time, and be great and rich and honored? and would it go off again in bliss?

In spite of doubts and fears, he was born. Still there was not harmony in the family, for there were those—Aunt Sophie among them—who stoutly maintained that it was out of all reason for him to be born, for nature would do some things, and she wouldn't do some others. The decisive result did not calm the excitement of the campaign.

A chubby-faced, saucy lump of a little rascal, who hadn't been in the world half an hour before he began to contract the dexter optic in a most elfish way, as who should say, "I'm fly; ole hoss; I'm fly!"

"A splendid boy, Mrs. Skinnem! a splendid boy, madam!" He's as fine a twelve-pounder as I've seen in thirty years' practice," and there stood that condensed medical college with Mrs. Skinnem's pulse palpitating in one hand and his massive gold watch throbbing in the other. Nurse reached over to take up the new darling, and as he was being lifted out, he made a dash at the doctor's gold watch.

Dr. Druggem enjoyed the joke, and looking prophetically into the maternal eyes, threw a wink across the room at the youngster, and said, "He'll be a keen one."

II.

HE GROWS.

Wherein of the Manner of his Growth, the Rapidity and Direction of the Same.

He sprouted as fast as the corn-stalk grows—
Just how, or why, the Lord only knows.

PETER SKINNEM grew—grew rapidly. Nothing grows faster than a good healthy boy-baby in this Land of Liberty, where everything is possible to everybody, and all the boys are in a hurry to be men.

As fast as he could little Peter got to be ten years old. Father Skinnem and Mother Skinnem registered a lofty vow that their son Peter should be kept out of the bad company which infested the neighborhood if they had to break every bone in his promising body. Stay out o' nights he shouldn't, and if they ever caught him with them Fetschem boys, there wouldn't be raw-hides enough in town to settle the score.

Little Peter Skinnem was taken to matriculate in the ward primary school, but he didn't like the teacher, and the society was not congenial. The boys twisted his name into all sorts of odd shapes

immensely pleasing to the juvenile mind. They crooked their forefingers and placed them longitudinally on the ridges of their noses, simultaneously shouting, "Sheeney Petee!" "I had a piece of pork" was a favorite ditty in little Peter's presence. These things to bear young Peter did not seriously incline. Wherefore he resolved not to obtrude frequently upon that company.

"Ma," asked little Peter, "what do the boys mean by shouting 'Sheeney!' at me?"

"Ask your father, Peter."

"Pa, the fellers yell 'Sheeney' at me—what do they mean?"

"They mean you're a sharp, shrewd boy, and will make your mark in the world if you do what's right and work hard."

"Work?" soliloquized little Peter; "work be d—d!"

Peter's parents were good people—almost too good, he thought, for they were always telling him to behave, and stop his noise, and to keep his fingers out of the preserve jars, and, whatever he did, to keep away from the wharves, where a little boy would fall into bad company and learn evil habits.

The wharves! The elder Skinnem was some years older than the younger Skinnem, but the junior could have taken the senior on a voyage of discovery along the wharves that would have opened Solomon Skinnem's eyes.

Ten o'clock; and the Skinnem household slept—all slept but the youthful Peter. It was his wont on retiring to kick off his shoes, fling his jacket on a chair, jump in bed and cover up to the neck. Mamma Skinnem would come in to see that her darling was snugly tucked in bed, and kiss him a fond good-night.

"Good-night? Well, I should smile! If I don't have a good one there ain't any in town;" and as the Skinnem household slept the sprig sprang from his bed, slipped into his roundabout, tucked his shoes under his arm, straddled the baluster, and gently descended. Out the kitchen door, over the fence, through a dark little alley, and off to join the "Wharf Rats," an association of congenial spirits, most of whom were older than himself. This company was mainly made up from that region of mystery and misery known as the slums, which began dangerously near to Peter's ancestral mansion.

Peter liked these boys. There was nothing stiff about them. They never placed their forefingers longitudinally on their noses, nor called him "Sheeny!"

"Pete, yer're smart, and we like yer," said the leader of the Rats. "Lots o' fellers wants to come in, just to learn the racket, yer know—but we ain't givin' it away to no snoozers, are we, fellers?"

"Not by a d—d sight!" roared the chorus.

Along the wharves they whiled the night hours

away, looking around for rope-ends, stray pieces of iron, tapping molasses bartels and sugar hogsheads, and sometimes a rum hogshead just to see little Mickey Flaherty "git blazin' drunk."

Most of the boys could dance jigs and sing songs, and the Rats were welcome in the sailors' boarding houses and other low dens on their beat. And it must be said for the men who kept these places that they always asked the boys to "take suthin'," an invitation which it was a cardinal principle of the Rats never to decline.

One night—you'd have split your sides if you'd been there—after the boys had been doing their double-shuffles, and singing their songs, and everybody was in good spirits, a sailor who had more bad spirits in him than his frail bark would carry, reeled out of the door into the darkness.

The keeper of the house winked his bleared eye playfully at Dick Dreadful, the leader of the Rats, and, reaching over the bar, whispered gently in his ear, "Dick, there's a go."

Dick led the way, and the Rats ran after him. How it happened, or who was to blame, is not for the historian to say. The Rats were running, somebody tripped, fell, dropped between the drunken sailor's legs, lifted him off his feet, flop he went on his back, a felt hat was crammed in his mouth, a boy manned each arm and each leg, and as many as could sat on him, while Dick Dreadful "went through him." The

"swag," as they called it, footed up one silver watch, one brass chain, \$11.50 in cash, one coat, one pair boots, one pair of socks, and one pair trousers divided in two parts, owing to the indisposition of the sailor to let them go. For fear he might make trouble they hammered the sailor, "to put him up for the night." The man who pointed the game gave the boys twenty-five cents and a glass of beer a-piece.

It must not be supposed that the Rats always went to this length. It was very often their good fortune to find a drunken man in a swinish sleep along the wharves, and then they took his valuables, if he had any, "to keep 'em from ketchin' cold."

The Skinnem household slept.

III.

HE GROWS MORE.

Wherein He Joins a Hose Company, Reaches His Majority, and Makes a High-Minded Resolve.

One who shows such talent with the spanner,
Is born to proudly bear his country's banner.

He grew more. Weeds grow not so fast as a boy who has got a fair start. Peter grew in stature and in intellect. He had drawn little from the books, but the Rats had given him such an education as was worth more to him than all the learning of the schools. He had learned how to take care of himself; how to be chin-deep in what was going on without getting any of the hard knocks; how to make other people rush in and knock down and drag out, while he surveyed the brush. Kept his shirt front clean and unbroken, got no scratches, and the lion's share of the "divide." The shrewd commercial sense born in him, and which, perhaps, had come down to him through a long line of ancestors on the paternal side—ancestors, alas! whose last trace had been swallowed up in the great swirling whirlpool of time —this keen instinct had been plowed and fertilized

by profitable experience, until it was a stock in trade with which not every young man starts in life.

The Rats outgrew the sports of the wharf, and drifted, by a kind of "of course" fate, into the finishing school of the Hose Company. Our hero was no longer Peter nor Pete. He was full-fledged Pete, for he "ran wid der machine." From the day his name went on the roll his influence in the company grew. Nobody spent more time at the Hose House than Pete. Nobody could work off more tickets for the annual ball, which occurred about three times a year. Nobody could rake in more "stuff" for the library which was never started. Nobody could run harder to a fire or yell louder. Nobody had a sharper scent for the best room in a burning house—a house that wasn't burning too fiercely. Nobody could make a show of doing more to keep up the honor of company. Nobody could keep farther off from real danger and get so much credit for being an active fireman.

When not otherwise engaged, Pete had taken fitful dives at a trade, but his employer never seemed suited, for he couldn't keep one long. But what did he care? He had no notion of work. He saw there was "nothing in it." There was Bill Bigfin—did he work? Not much. He had a bar-room, but that wasn't working the skin off his bones, and that wasn't his real business. Bigfin was a politician, and that was where he got his work in. He was a fireman,

too, and had gone up from the bottom, but the machine was only an incident to the graver business of politics.

Bigfin carried his ward "here!" as he used to say, slapping his hand on his breeches' pocket. He was courted by the big city politicians of both parties and all factions. There was no better-dressed man in town. The boys used to say that the flash of Bill Bigfin's diamond pin once knocked a rival fireman's eye out (whenever this story was told the boys laughed, and somebody was sure to breathe the uncharitable suspicion that "Bigfin's fist wasn't far off when that peeper popped out"). Bigfin always had money to spread among the boys, and any gentleman might have been content with the comforts of his household.

Pete Skinner looked at Bill Bigfin and his surroundings—looked and thought. Then he chewed it all over and swallowed it, with a cud left for reflection.

"It must be politics. Why, you ain't a d—d fool, are you, Pete Skinner? Of course it's politics. What else could it be?"

When that other inquiring mind saw that it was the steam inside of it that made the kettle quiver, he was on the right road.

"I'll use the Hose Company. I'll crawl right along on its back, and I'll make it so pleasant for the boys that they'll be glad to run while I ride. I'll

have more real power than Bill Bigfin—I can do it, for I'm smarter. He runs his ward, but I'll run him, and he won't drop to the little game. I'll be as rich as a dozen Bill Bigfins, and I'll be a d—d sight higher-toned, for I won't be a gin-slinger. But what's use o' talkin'? Work, Petee Skinnem, work—get right down to it and let's see your gait."

What can equal the value of a good example? Bigfin was the exemplar, but rather under stature. Pete Skinnem aimed higher than Bill Bigfin, but he kept him in sight as something to steer by.

The annual election of officers of the Plug-Ugly Hose Company was drawing near. There was a good deal of dissatisfaction in the company, and a very strong opposition was laying the lines for a new deal. In a very accomplished way Pete did what he could to help on the growl, but when the growlers held a caucus he wasn't there. He explained that he was willing to do all he could for the company as the boys knew—

"Yes, we all know that!"

But he didn't want to take sides against friends.

"Just the man we want, for a hose company ain't nothin' without harmony."

"He ain't no man, he's only a boy!" growled an old fire-sharp back in the corner.

"Wh-a-a-a-t's that you say, you old bag o' bones? I'll smash yer"—but the boys jumped in between them, for the old man wasn't too old nor too drunk

to "put up his props," and Tom Turtle had a very destructive way of conducting an argument.

Pete deprecated any trouble among friends, and said he would have to leave the company if they kept this thing up.

"No, you won't, either!"

"Not by a d—d sight!"

"Let's make him chief director!"

"That's the racket—Pete Skinnem foreman of the Plug-Ugly Hose."

The enthusiasm was wild.

"Gentlemen," said the hero, "it has been insinuated here that I ain't no man. I ain't goin' to say anything about what I've done for this company (cheers) nor what I intend to do for it (Hooray! hooray!) but if some people want to help me to mind my own business, I'll tell 'em that I am twenty-one, and maybe they won't like that no better. (Up-roarious cheering.) But that ain't the point. I can't be your director. There's older men and better firemen here than me. (No! no!) You'll excuse me, gentlemen, but you must wait till I've seen more service. I'm willin' to do most anything you want but that."

"Let's make him President, then. What d'ye say, boys?"

"President Pete Skinnem; that's the snap!" They wouldn't hear to anything else, and President he had to be.

Who that looked into that beardless boy's face would have thought that he had set that whole thing up, partly by drawing on his own capital of shrewdness, partly by striking a ward politician for a loan, to be paid back in "work" when he got the Plug-Ugly Company in his pocket.

IV.

HE SPREADS.

Wherein of His First Venture as a Politician with Something to Deliver. Also of How He Worked it and What He did with it.

Our band is few, but true and tried,
Our leader frank (!) and bold.

HE spread. He had something to spread on. A man with a hose company in his pocket had the trading capital to warrant ambitious ventures. His time on the wharves and "wid der machine" had not been wasted. He had lots of acquaintances and "hosts of friends." Before he had a vote he had hung around the polls and hobnobbed with politicians, and got a good insight into the workings of the thing. He had learned that delegate election was a farce, and the ward convention a fraud. He had detected the several varieties of Heathen Chinee business, and observed that the longest pole knocked the most persimmons. He determined that he would keep on splicing his pole at other people's expense, until it became as long as any of them.

Mr. Robert O'Hay had determined to "go for" a

lucrative elective office under the city government. The election was not very near at hand, but he was a "knowing one," who appreciated the necessity of getting his work in early. He knew that a candidate for a nomination who had the City Committee against him might as well try to open a stone quarry with a tooth-pick. The primaries were approaching at which would be elected—by the sovereign will of the people—the City Committee-men, who could make or break him.

Pete got wind of Mr. O'Hay's candidacy, and he had an idea. He threw himself in Mr. O'Hay's way, and said he heard that Mr. O'Hay was after a big chunk.

"Who told you that, Pete?"

"Oh, there's nothing much goes on that I don't know. I guess you're keepin' it dark till you get things fixed."

"Pete," said Mr. O'Hay, looking deep into the eyes of the President of the Plug-Ugly Company, "you're a smart young man, and I've heard of your work. You can do a man a heap of good or lots of harm in your ward."

"You bet your boots."

"I'd like to get the City Committee-man from your ward."

"Shouldn't wonder! But it's early, you know, and maybe the party won't be for you. You know they come out pretty strong to the primaries in our ward."

"But work tells, don't it, Pete?"

"That's what they say."

"Let's go take something."

They called for a little out of the same bottle, leaned on the bar, crossed their legs in front of it, struck their glasses, and made a grab for the water.

"Petee, my boy, are you with me in this fight?"

"Me, Mr. O'Hay?"

"Yes, you, Peter Skinnem!"

"Mr. O'Hay, I'm solid for cash!"

"Cash! Who the devil's Cash? You don't mean that old fellow who went to smash a year ago, and couldn't pay ten cents on the dollar—filled up his store with empty boxes, and sold out to an insurance company?"——

"No, I don't mean him, Mr. O'Hay. Beats that all hollow. Best friend I've got. Solid for cash all the time. See the point?" and the young rascal poked the older rascal playfully in the ribs. They both laughed, and they both drank again.

"Can you make a sure thing of it, Pete?"

"Hit it every time for cash. There ain't a policy row like it for a sure thing."

"What's the figure?"

Just then a gang of the hose fellows dropped in, and Pete raised on tip-toe to pour the figure into Mr. O'Hay's ear.

"It's a go. Shake. Mum."

V.

HE OPERATES.

*Wherein of the Modus Operandi of Cooking a Committee in
a Hat.*

Grown wiser for the lesson given,
I fear no longer, for I know.

"PETE SKINNEM, here's your chance to show what's in you. It's a good stake for a starter—if you hive it all yourself. If you go to spreading it around it will be of no use to anybody, and you, Pete Skinnem, won't be a peg further on. What are you going to do about it?"

Thus communed the ambitious Pete with his inner self. His lips closed and he dropped into a deep study. Slowly emerging, as though feeling his way, he talked to himself again, and as suddenly broke off.

"G—d! Pete Skinnem, I almost gave you up for a fool!" he exclaimed, jumping to his feet. "That's the racket, and they can't beat it."

Tommy Tumble was Secretary of the Ward Executive Committee, a better "scholar" than most of his companions, for he could read and write and add up two columns of figures... He was always "inside" on

election day, and it has been said that he has more than once corrected an unhealthy public sentiment after it had poured its unholy wrath into the sacred Palladium of Liberty.

Pete sought the accomplished Secretary, and knowing his haunts, had no trouble to find him.

"Girls," said Pete, "you'll have to do without Tommy Tumble's smiles for a while this evening. Tommy and me's got business."

"Now, Pete, you ain't goin' to treat the ladies that way, are you? Ain't you goin' to say nothin' afore you run off with that sweet boy and make widders of us all?" This in a playfully upbraiding tone from the presiding genius of that quarter section of Fairy Land.

"Ah! Mom, you're a sly one. Business all the time, eh! Well, girls, nominate your pizin—what shall it be?"

"Beer!" shouted the chorus.

"Beer be d—d!" roared an old girl with a painted face and a frowzy head.

"Nance never mixes 'em," said Mom, and everybody laughed. Then everybody drank, and Pete Skinnem and Tommy Tumble kissed the best-looking girls and went out.

This was rather an interference with Tommy's programme for the evening, but when the President of the Plug-Ugly Hose Company spoke he was in the habit of getting a ready audience. He was rising in

the ward, and generally regarded as a good man to tie to.

"Tommy," began Pete, "I've got a scheme, and it's prettier 'n a picture. Ted McFarlan wants to go to the City Committee—you needn't laugh—he does, for a fact."

Tommy hadn't thought of laughing. He was buckling his ear right down to Pete's mouth, eager to know what that rising statesman had on his mind.

"I knew you'd say it was ridiculous, Tommy, and we've got to shut him off. He ain't much of a worker, nohow, and I'm d—d if we're going to let that kind of a feller sweep the deck."

"You're about right, Pete; but who are you for in this fight?"

"Me? I'm solid for cash—first, last, and all the time."

"Cash? We ain't got no Cash in this ward, Pete, least not among the workers."

"Best thing we can do, Tommy, I tell you, and you know I've got my eyes open. If we make this thing we'll be all right in the City Committee, and get the best kind of a twist on the ward, and I guess I know a young man who wouldn't mind having something better 'n a \$600 job in the Health Office."

This argument was sufficient to convince Tommy of the eminent expediency of the thing, but he didn't see the way clear. Teddy McFarlan's candidacy wasn't a revelation to him. Teddy had told him

about it only the night before, and Tommy had promised to support him. He'd give him his own division—that wouldn't be hard, for Tommy was going to be inside—and he swore he would do as much more as he could for him. This by way of minor obstacle. For major obstacle was the essential fact that he didn't see how the thing was going to be done.

"That's all good enough, Pete, what you're saying, but Teddy's got lots of friends, and he told me that the Neckers were coming over to help him."

"Well, now, Tommy Tumble, didn't I say I had a scheme? You don't suppose I'm going to be sucking my fingers while Teddy McFarlan's getting his work in, do you? You've got a good memory, ain't you, Tommy—say the multiplication table backwards, and all-that sort of thing?"

"I don't forget anything I know right well, Pete."

"All right; now we're coming to it. It's a mere question of memory, Tommy, whether Teddy McFarlan gets that Committee or we get it. We must have the Committee on Contests—don't you see? Ain't that clear enough?"

"Clear as day. But how are we going to get it? That's as dark as night, and it ain't in the wood, as I can see."

"Of course you can't see it now. It's my patent. I'm the inventor, and I'm going to let you in on the ground-floor. I put in the invention and you supply the memory."

"But you can't work no scheme to bag the Committee under the new rules—they're tight as wax."

"The rules be d—d! Like good resolutions, they're made to be broken. The thing can be done, and you're just the man to do it. I've studied out the business, and all depends upon your power of memorizing. You know the names of the members of the Ward Committee as well as you do your A B C's. Now here's all you've got to do: When you are cutting up the slips on which the names are written be sure that they are all of a size. Ask some one to examine them to see that they are all right. Nobody will do such a thing, and it will get you the confidence of your colleagues on the Committee. Then throw the slips in the hat and shake them up lively. Now you're going to get in your fine work, Tommy. You know the fellers we want on the Committee—or you will know when I tell you. The names are in the hat. Now begin to draw them out one at a time, rapidly and, as it might be, carelessly. You're calling them off right straight along, you know, crunching them in your hand, and throwing them in the spittoon or somewhere near it in the tobacco spit, so that you don't leave no tell-tales. Always kill the witnesses, Tommy. Now, as you call them off, if you strike one of our friends, why you just don't call him, that's all, and you call another name. Here's where the memory comes in, for when you've called a name once that's enough, or they'll get down to you. When

you've thrown 'em all out except the number to make the Committee, you just call off the names of our fellers, and there's your Committee on Contests. Why, it's as easy as rolling off a log—don't you see?"

"My G—d, Pete, did you get that in a dream? Why it's beautiful! But suppose some of Teddy's friends smells something queer, and wants to look into the hat?"

"Slug him, —— ——, for insulting you—you ain't no common gutter-snipe. We'll havè some of the boys outside, and if there's a mill we'll clean out the whole d—d shebang. But there won't be no trouble. It'll work as slick as grease. We'll fix up about a dozen contested cases or so, we'll have the Committee, and Teddy McFarlan's busted. We'll get our man, and that's all there is about it."

The primary came off, and Teddy McFarlan got "bilin'" drunk that night on the strength of getting two-thirds of the Committee-men and having a dead sure thing of it for the City Committee. The Ward Committee met later, and there were contests from fifteen of the divisions which Teddy's friends had carried. The indignation among the McFarlan men was great, and a fight was imminent, but the Chairman, who happened to be Pete Skinnem's friend without being in all his secrets, said:

"Gentlemen, there's no use of gettin' excited over this. We must respect these contests, but there won't be no crooked business done here. The men

what's elected will get in and the others won't. The Committee on Contests 'll see to that, and you know that under the new rules there can't be no gougin' in drawin' the Committee."

This mollifier took well and they got down to work. The nimble Secretary responded with alacrity to the call, and before that select and breathless audience he performed the hat trick in a way that delighted Pete Skinnem's heart and set the McFarlan men crazy. Some very ugly phrases were flung around, and half a dozen broad-shouldered gentlemen slid out of their coats in a minute.

"Gentlemen," said the Chairman, "don't disgrace this Committee. Everything's been done fair and square—right before your eyes—and there ain't no use of kicking."

The Chairman had seen it done, but he didn't know how it was done, and the performance "struck him all of a heap," as he afterwards told Tommy Tumble.

The gentlemen who had been drawn for the Committee on Contests didn't quite understand it, either, but they knew what was expected of them, and that was enough. One Committee-man, a burly, beefy fellow, said he hoped nobody didn't mean to insult the Committee, for he'd be eternally chawed up if he'd allow anybody to play him for a flat.

The assembly was quieted. The Committee on Contests performed its high functions. The McFarlan

men got no show, Pete's contestants got their seats, and the Ward Committee was so "Solid for Cash" that Pete got his man in the City Committee, and had the honor to be invited to take wine with Mr. O'Hay.

"Pete, you're cut out for a public career," said Mr. O'Hay.



WANTS A POLITICAL JOB.

VI.

HE SEEKS BUSINESS.

Wherein of His Contemplative Walks Abroad and his Luck.

Whene'er I take my walks abroad
How many rich I see!

As Pete strolled out for his airings he was in the habit of stumbling over men who had some small position under the city government—very often a position to which no salary was attached, and it was his habit to turn over in his young mind what might be the moving cause of their satisfied air, broadcloth clothes, handsome watch chains, fast horses, and rapid women; and, he had heard, they were in the habit of drinking champagne as freely as the fellers down his way took in the five-cent whiskey, or the lower grade revelled in three-cent "pour-back." They didn't all have fine houses, but some of them had two houses, and they all had money to spend among the boys, all were looked up to by the rounders, and most of them were bowed to in a very deferential way by respectable citizens of high standing and large bank accounts.

"That's none too good for me," said Pete; "and that's just about the head of steam I want to get on, but how do they do it? A man on \$1,500 a year can't do that, and a man who puts in all his time for the public welfare, without a dollar's pay, can't get within a mile of it. There's something in this thing of being the public's humble servant, and I'm going to find it out. When I do—stand from under! There won't any of 'em fly a higher kite than Pete Skinnem."

Pete made a study of the situation. By degrees he found what these princes of the blood had sprung from. John Marrow had been a mutton butcher. John Valley had been a sculptor—cut stone for a living when he wasn't running "wid der merchine." William Stockton had dealt in sour-balls, in a moderate way. Elijah Rohan had been a bill-poster. William Seeds had been a policeman. Other fellows had been other things. Shamus O'Toole, from the north of Ireland, a man who was just then getting his hooks in, and who afterwards earned the proud title of Big Boss, hadn't been much of anything until he struck politics. These men were not so rich then, nor so powerful as they afterwards became by the indulgent sufferance of a grateful people, but Pete saw enough in them at that writing to excite his envy and set his ambition on fire.

While Pete was investigating the situation he made one valuable discovery after another. He

found out how it was that a City Father could afford to attend the stated and special meetings of his body, drive out at the city's expense to inspect public works, see that things were moving smoothly and for the public weal, and dine on canvas-back duck and terrapin with the tax-payers, the said tax-payers not being present at the feast. He saw how it was that they could build houses and more houses, and take summer trips to cool off and winter trips to warm up. He understood why it was that they owned city railway stock and dead-headed it on passes. He had a glimmering consciousness of why it was that they were sometimes invited to the houses of rich men of social status, and their diamond pins lost some of the charm of mystery.

At that time there existed in the city a Department of Breadstuffs—queer name, wasn't it?—which was empowered by law to supply citizens with flour in large quantities or small, and bread in the loaf. The department had the monopoly, and the penalty for buying elsewhere was ten years in the penitentiary and \$1,000 fine, or both, at the discretion of the court. No other city in America had anything like it, and there was much rebellion among the people because of it. But the department flourished, and so did the trustees, for they had the thing all their own way, under a law of their own securing, which made them independent of everybody and everybody subservient to them. They employed about two thou-

sand men, and Pete observed that the men were all active politicians, who put in big licks at the primaries, and at general election, and never knew how they stood until they got word from the Boss. But where was the money made? Everything in the way of supplies was bought by contract after competition, there were the books (which no outsider ever saw), and there was no secret about the price of flour and bread. When Pete "tumbled to the racket," as he put it, his eyes danced with joy, and he was forced to admit to himself that it was as good as the hat trick.

"Now I see how you work it, my elegant gentlemen," mused Pete, "your bidders are in cahoots—they pool their issues, and it don't make any difference which one gets the contract, they take share and share alike, and they let you in for the divvy. Then there's the freight drawbacks. Lord! they must amount to a quarter million a year, and that don't never go on the books, you bet your life, Peter Skinnem. Pete, you're doin' bully! You're gettin' facts, and the time will come when you'll get your hooks in somewhere."

At this time whereof the historian treats a new City Hall was being built. Foreigners who gazed in awe on the massive foundations, and then the slowly rising walls, and still again the able architects' plans, said there was nothing like it in all Europe. Pete took a lively interest in this building, for the most active

of the commissioners who had it in charge lived like nabobs, and in politics they were strong. An agile and discriminating mind was not long in getting to the bottom of the City Hall business, and there he found contracts rolling in fat.

"The City Hall is a puddin'," said Pete.

It was about the same way with everything the city had done. Contracts, contracts, divvies, divvies; and the same set of men turned up everywhere, mixing politics and business in the most facile manner. As far as Pete could see they gave more time to politics than to business.

"But politics is business," thought Pete, "and it's all a big ring, with lots of little rings inside of it."

"Mr. Robert O'Hay, right you are. I'm cut out for a public career, and now that you've got your fat office—elected by an overwhelming majority of your fellow-citizens—I guess you wouldn't craw-fish if a bright young feller like Peter Skinnem was to ask you for a small slice of what's goin'; a very small slice—not too small, but just small enough—will do for a beginning. After he gets a solid start I think the young man can take care of himself."

When Pete presented himself at Mr. O'Hay's office he was ushered into an ante-room, where he found as motley a gang as ever hung on a successful politician's heels. There were broken-down merchants, who in their palmy days had contributed liberally to the party, and could be relied on to sign calls for

well-known citizens to allow the use of their names before conventions, for their signatures to "last cards," and for a straight ticket all the time. There were men in office who wanted offices for their friends, and little politicians, division gudgeons, who were willing to accept office for themselves. Some were high in the head, and wore glossy plug-hats. Some were down at the heel, and wore slouches with holes in them. Pete saw that the high-flyers were ushered in first, and by a grading of the assemblage, most favorable to himself, he concluded that he would get into the little back office some time the next day if he waited his turn.

"I never saw a man get ahead in a public career by modesty, Mr. O'Hay, and if Pete Skinnem isn't the next man to go through that door I'll eat my hat."

And in he popped, to the dismay of the usher, and the riled astonishment of the crowd. Mr. O'Hay was glad to see him, but busy, very busy. Run to death this way every day. But of course he was glad to see his friends. Really there wasn't any vacancy in his office, but they would slip out the back way and go up to see what could be done on the highways. They could generally crowd another man in there. They crowded Pete in, and he was a happy man. He never could discover what he had to do there, except it was to crowd his friends into smaller places, and draw his salary with studious punctuality.

While holding this public post, Pete did two things which showed him a man of rare forethought, and eminently fitted for a public career.

First of all, he exacted a bonus, payable monthly, without default, from every man he had appointed. This, he explained, was for the party. The party never saw any of it.

There happened to be a turn in the popular tide, which gave some of the most important offices to the opposition, and Pete saw that the time was not far distant when the opposition would hold the trump cards ; which was his sufficient reason for planting himself on solid ground with the said opposition. He played it so fine that by a seemingly natural transition, he went over, just at the right time, into the ranks of the opposition, now become the Majority party. To his credit it must be said that this is the only time our hero ever changed his coat. From that day on he labored for the public good under the one banner. While other men were changing all around him, he remained firm and true—Solid for Cash !

VII.

HIS AMBITION SOARS.

Wherein of His Determination to Make Laws for a Great State.

Let me make the laws of a people,
And I care not who writes its songs.

PETE continued to keep his eyes open, and among other things he saw that it was a great advantage to be in the Legislature—of advantage for its own sake, for it paid on the spot; of advantage collaterally, for some of the snuggest places in town were filled by men who had been in the Legislature. Lumping the whole thing, he saw immediate power, honor and gain, and in the future the gilded turrets of a most enchanting castle in the air.

"I'm off for the Legislature," said Pete, and he started.

The rude tocsin of war aroused the land from peaceful slumbers. Many men hurried to the front, among them the strongest man in the district, and the one who was to have been sent to the Legislature this time. Pete argued, patriotically, that the district couldn't spare both of its great men, and he looked

upon discretion as the better part of patriotism. The excitement was very great. Two sons and a brother of the sitting member went into the army, and the sitting member's friends put that forward as his claim for re-election. He was popular in his district, and as the other man was out of the way, there was a strong disposition to return the incumbent.

In those days the boss system was young, and while it was understood that no outsiders were to be let in, the boys were generally allowed to have a scrub race among themselves. Those were the days of bloody fights at the primaries, and of murders enough to keep the daily papers up to the high watermark of interest.

The Neckers were for Samson, and the Plug-Uglies were at fever heat for Skinnem. On the night of the delegate election it happened that there was a big blaze, and the boys had their machines out for a run. It also happened that the Plug-Uglies ran into the Neckers, and there was an ugly row. The air was filled with pistols, black-jacks, brick-bats and paving-stones. Even the peaceful spanner was precipitated into the fight. One of the Neckers went down with his boots on, and nobody knew who popped him over. Somehow it got into the morning papers that the murdered man was shot by one of his own company who had a grudge against him. The Plug-Uglies tore out the polling places which were certain to return Samson delegates, and somehow they got

credit for a noble defence of the ballot-box against the ruffianly Neckers, who set a house on fire just to pick a fight for the dastardly purpose of nominating a man whom the party didn't want and the people wouldn't elect. Bill Bigfin led the Neckers, and if a brick-bat hadn't brought him down early in the fray, the result might have been very different, and there might have been a sudden halt in Pete Skinnem's public career. It is perhaps unnecessary to remark that Pete hadn't a hair turned in the whole scrimmage (having acted with his customary caution); and that he went into the convention with bruisers enough to terrify the few decent people who were let in. There were contests, of course, from all the Samson divisions, but the hat trick shut them off, and there was really no opposition to speak of.

A young lawyer placed Mr. Peter Skinnem in nomination in a speech which ransacked all history to find heroes big enough to make any decent comparison with Mr. Skinnem. He painted glowing pictures of blazing buildings, where Peter Skinnem vaulted to the roof and stood there, wrapt in flame and stifled with smoke, the nozzle in his hand, calmly playing on the devouring element. He pictured Peter Skinnem hurrying down the ladder with a mother on his back and her three helpless babes clasped tenderly in his manly arms.

Pete buried his face in his hands. The convention broke out in such tremendous cheers that the

young lawyer's voice was drowned, and before he could put Pete in any more heroic attitudes, a delegate jumped up and shouted, "I move we nominate Mr. Peter Skinnem by acclamation, and here's a fist for the mon as sez a worrud again' 'im!"

The Chair put the motion; there was a wild hurrah, and Peter Skinnem was declared the nominee. There were some, inside and outside, who were not pleased with the result nor the way it had been reached, and they raged and swore about it. A Skinnem man knocked a Samson man down for calling him a string of names that would throw a printing press out of gear, and then there was pandemonium. Benches and tables were dismembered for weapons; chairs sailed through the air; the pistol and black-jack were in bloom. When the police quelled the riot, two very hopeless cases were taken to the hospital, one of them suffering from a contused spittoon wound in the head.

According to Mr. Skinnem's party organ, election day passed off as quietly as though it had been Sunday. An opposition organ said, "Hell broke loose in the —th district yesterday, and the victorious heeler, Pete Skinnem, the Plug-Ugly Hose pet, was elected to the Legislature by the black-jack and pistol."

That night the opposition organ's establishment was gutted.

Congratulations poured in upon the Hon. Peter

Skinnem. The great men of the city assured him that they felt a personal triumph in his well-deserved elevation, and they were sure that he would leave his impress upon the current history of his State. Much to his surprise, Bill Bigfin, not quite recovered from the brick-bat on the head, congratulated Pete, said he was "a d---d smart feller," and for his part he was willing to let bygones be bygones, and it was his private opinion that if the Plug-Uglies and the Neckers would pull together, they could have things all their own way, and he and Pete could go ahead a-whooping in politics. Bill meant every word he said, and Pete wasn't sorry to turn so strong a foe into so good an ally. From that day they worked in harmony, and both prospered. Bill did the hard hitting, and Pete the slick work; each watched the other, and both looked out for chances. When a troublesome fellow was to be got out of the way, Pete received the credit of planning the job, and Bill of finding ways and means of executing it.

VIII.

AT THE STATE CAPITAL.

*Wherein of the Shifts to Pass the Time, and his Initiation
into a Secret Guild.*

He loved to steal a while away.

THE HON. PETER SKINNEM was in his place at the opening of the Legislature, and when he stood up to gulp down the iron-clad oath of office, which called the Almighty to witness that he had done no wrong to secure his seat, and would do no crooked thing while he held it, his conscience never so much as said to him,

“Peter Skinnem, you’re an infamous liar.”

His conscience held no communication with him. Conscience always gets a divorce from a man who goes into politics on the make. It is just as well, for it saves them both trouble.

The early days of a session are not full of meat. Only about an hour a day is devoted to legislative business, and the other hours have to be put in at something else. The Hon. Peter Skinnem pined for his home associations, but he pined less and his yearnings were not so vigorous when he made

acquaintances and got well broken in. There being no rational amusements in the town, members felt it necessary to shape amusements for themselves. Time must be passed somehow, and what more natural than that honorable gentlemen should turn to cards for some relief. The Hon. Pete, being of a social turn, was invited to take a hand. Now, if he was at home anywhere, it was at the card table. It was his boast at home that he could "flirt the papes" with any of them.

The corporation lobbyists observed that Pete was just such a man as they had use for, and they were not long finding out that he liked to play cards for "a little something to make it interesting." Trust corporation lobbyists for taking a new member's measure early in the session. Pete was invited to the rooms of the corporation lobbyists, where the bottle was always uncorked, the segars plentiful and free to all comers, and a little game went on with the regularity of a clock. It was merely a social game—the social feature being embodied in the stake. Pete found to his surprise that he had a good deal to learn, and that this was very different from a walk-over in the Plug-Ugly Hose House. He had fallen in with experts. But he was smart and apt, and it wasn't long before he could "stock" the cards with the smartest of them. Then his luck set in, and he made the social diversion pay. That he did not ring in a "cold deck" was because after such a performance he was certain to be shut out of the game.

One of Pete's little put-up jobs was very creditable to his shrewdness, and convinced those of his friends who knew it that there was a great undeveloped mine of good in him. A gang of gamblers had taken a mean advantage of a drunken member, and Pete took upon himself the friendly task of avenging the wrong. He gave it to them so hot and sharp that they were routed, and Pete salted a very snug pile as his share of the loot. How much his friend got back nobody seems to have known. But it was the rule of Pete's life never to go into any enterprise unless there was "something in it." It has been said that the corporation lobbyists sometimes let him win a handsome stake when they had some legislative work cut out for him. This possible calumny there is no means of thoroughly verifying or satisfactorily disproving.

Pete soon discovered that scarcely a bill passed which did not put cash into somebody's pocket at the capital, and with noble heroism he planted his veto on every bill that came up. This course systematically pursued brought a lobbyist, or the member having the bill in charge, to Pete's feet, and he profited greatly thereby. Having learned the ropes, he saw how easy it would be, and what a thriving trade he could drive, if he combined the duties of legislator and lobbyist, and he forthwith rolled the two into one. After that it was no uncommon thing to see the young man in close consultation with his colleagues examining a roll of members which had a

"tick" opposite certain names. This roll was a list of the yeas and nays on one of the bills which had been intrusted to Pete's care, and the Journal Clerk had very obligingly furnished it. The list looked innocent enough, but it really represented what was nearest and dearest to Pete's heart—cash. It was his voucher to his employees that he had paid out so much money. It is related that Pete once played it a little fine with one of his pay rolls, and a shrewd corporation President tripped him up. Pete had charged up against the company \$500 for a member who was also a well-known attorney. In auditing the account the practised eye of the President lit on the name of the attorney. He was dumbfounded.

"How's this?" exclaimed the President; "here's a man who has been an attorney for us for years, and we pay him an annual salary for attending to our business, which includes his services at the Capital."

Pete would regret it as much as anybody if it was a mistake, but he really couldn't understand how that could be. Still, he might have made a mistake, and he would look into it.

The truth of the matter was that Pete believed that his fellow-member had voted for the measure from an honest conviction, and he thought he might just as well pocket the \$500 in cash. That was a mistake which he was never again known to make. And it is related, as another interesting feature of this occasion, that Peter blushed. He was never caught at that again, either.

Cards were not the only amusement in which the able Solons indulged to kill time. Pete's introduction to the society of the capital was at a tan ball, where the ladies were of mixed colors, and most of the gentlemen legislators and State employees. The dance was hot and the atmosphere heavy, and the adjournment for refreshments was frequent. The beaus of various tints had to stand back and make room for the "white gen'lemen," which they did with no very good grace. There was much promiscuous drinking, and this, in the minds of the involuntary wall-flowers, very greatly aggravated the offence of the "white gen'lemen." A lusty buck, whose Dulcinea had been the flattered object of a well-known member's attentions for half the evening, purposely threw himself in the way as the couple waltzed by him, and the three of them fell in a heap on the floor. In an instant there was an impromptu division on the color line, a rush, and a sudden halt. Flashing razors cowered and furled their banner before the advancing battery of revolvers, and the offending buck, with two of his most active partisans, was pitched headlong down the stairs. This mild corrective prevented a breach of the peace, the bucks slid quietly out, and the ball-room was left to ladies and gentlemen who knew how to enjoy themselves without making trouble. Pete remarked that he hadn't had such a real good time since he led the Grand March at the Neckers' ball. It was not to be expected that he would

add that he had secured that honorable distinction by the purchase of \$1,000 worth of tickets paid for by a candidate who employed Pete to work up the Neckers and their stamping ground in his interest. By a private arrangement with Bigfin, Pete was allowed a drawback of \$200 on the sale.

The way in which Pete "got his hooks into the pay roll" is chiefly interesting as showing what a close observer he was. He saw some colored men pottering about below stairs, and that at once excited his suspect.

"Nigger in the wood-pile—something wrong," exclaimed Pete. "Niggers can't get on the roll—too many deserving white men who have to be provided for. Must run this thing out, Pete Skinnem, and see how it's done."

Pete's first discovery was that there were exactly four of these colored fellow-citizens, and that their pay was precisely \$500 a year each.

"That's a lie," ejaculated Pete. "They don't get no such big money. There's a white man sitting on this wood-pile, and if I don't get a bead on him my name ain't Pete Skinnem."

Patient industry was rewarded. The inquiring mind discovered that the editor of the hot and cold organ at the capital was the owner and operator of this little snap; that he hired the colored men for \$1 a day each, and pocketed the difference. Taking a short cut to the editorial sanctum, Pete informed Mr.

Brain Power that he had a piece of news which was worth something. Mr. Brain Power laughed and unsuspectingly said of course he would make it satisfactory. Pete said he wasn't much of a hand at writing, so he would just give Mr. Brain Power the points and he could work them up. There was some disposition to wriggle out of it, but as Pete very conclusively remarked, "Oh, I've got this dead to rights!" there was nothing to do but to form a limited partnership right there, and Pete accepted \$25 as an earnest of the good faith of the party of the second part. There were a good many of those things at the Capital, and Pete felt it a duty he owed to his constituents to get into them. It is needless to say that he always obeyed the voice of duty.



THE EDITOR IS AMAZED.

IX.

FORTUNE SMILES.

Wherein of His Provident Ways and High Moral Principles.

"Oh! heaven!" he cried. "My bleeding country save!"

PERHAPS no man ever rose more rapidly in any Legislature than the Hon. Peter Skinnem. He learned rapidly, and what he lacked in education and polish he made up in tact and eternal vigilance.

"This is the way I argue," Pete was in the habit of saying to himself; "a blind man, or a deaf man ain't got no more business in politics than a dumb man. It's a big fight all the time, politicians on one side, people on the other. The people put a man in office, and as soon as they get him in they want to get him out—call him hard names and tell ugly stories about him, and talk about Reform. The people are fools—that's why I'm against them. There are so many men in the world. They must live. Some of 'em are mechanics, some store-keepers, some farmers, some preachers and that kind, and some are politicians. Now suppose they'd abolish preaching—the balance would be

upset and we'd have to build wings to all the poor-houses. It is a crime against society, that's what it is, to try to take the bread out of any man's mouth and throw him on the county. They can't pull Pete Skinnem down that way, that's what's the matter! Mouth shut, eyes and ears open, solid for cash all the time! Only way to get along where everybody's on the make."

A man entertaining these noble convictions can't help prospering in a public career. Pete was active when he took hold of a thing with "something in it," and it is simple justice to him to say that he would not soil his legislative hands with anything else. It became a hopeless task to get through a bill with the odor of cash about it without retaining Pete Skinnem, and if there was cash on both sides there was great rivalry to get the first approach well into his understanding. After he was retained he required watching, for it was a standing joke that he would sell to both sides, if he got the chance, and deliver to that client who put up the most "sugar," as he sweetly called it. He made his first diamond pin in just such a double-jointed job, involving a small stake, to be sure, but appealing, nevertheless, to his sense of duty.

It may already have been inferred that the Hon. Peter Skinnem was no bitter partisan. He had his own principles, as we have seen, and he was uncompromising in his hostility to everything and every-

body that opposed them, but still he was able to rate a man at his worth, or a measure at its full value, irrespective of party. Among his constituents he was the bitterest kind of a party man—a contentious, savage fellow who charged on all occasions that the opposing party was a band of thieves and murderers, actuated by no higher impulse than an ungodly thirst for power. And why did they want power? He could tell 'em. They wanted power because it gave 'em a whack at the spoils. He had this speech by heart, and it was about all he ever attempted. In his non-partisan intercourse outside of the district he used to say, good-naturedly:

"It's all d—d nonsense, of course, but if you didn't give 'em taffy, and blackguard the other side, how the h—l could you hold 'em together? There wouldn't be no party, and then where'd we be—you, and me, and all of us, sir? No, sir! We must keep up the organization, and you can't do that without principles."

An occasion offered for the Hon. Peter Skinnem to show to his constituents and the whole city that his heart was with his party, and whatever so humble a man could do was at the party's service. Pete's party was in power in the city, and responsible for as bad a police force as ever scourged a community. Murder was a common pastime, and not often punished. Highway robbery was a regular business. The robbery of two banks and one municipal office

(about which last there were many uncharitable surmises) caused the good people to ask what they should do to be saved. A good deal was said about taking the police out of the Mayor's control, and the best of the newspapers suggested that a Metropolitan Police Board was the only salvation. A bill to this effect was offered in the Legislature, and the whole police force was in a state of nervous prostration. Word was passed around among the men, and a Committee of Safety was formed to handle the enemy. The Hon. Peter Skinnem was retained as special counsel and his advice was eagerly sought. At the first meeting of the Committee, which was composed of high officers of the force, Pete said he was going to tell them the unpleasant truth, and they might think it over.

"I tell you what it is, gentlemen, I never saw such a pressure in my life, and members are giving way like paper men. The country fellers are glad of a chance to put it to us in the city, and you can see how the d—d newspapers are hissing 'em on. I'm willing to do all I can, but there ain't any one man can collar a whole Legislature that's determined on destruction."

The Chairman of the Committee of Safety said they had thought over all that, and they also thought that a man of Skinnem's experience and sociable ways could beat the bill if he had the cash.

"Now you're talking," said Peter. "You've struck

it exactly. I am sorry to say that there are men in the Legislature—I meet 'em every day—that can be bought—bought right out—but some of 'em are high-toned and devilish high-priced, and don't you forget it."

"Skinnem, the men are willing to stand an assessment for this thing; it's their bread and butter, and they haven't any choice. Then we have some friends who will help us for the good of the party. How will \$100,000 do?"

"Wouldn't be enough. It wouldn't go around for votes, let alone speeches, and some of the best talkers there are for the bill. We must either shut them up or get them to speak on our side."

"Very well, then; we must raise more."

And they raised \$160,000. "Our friends," who were referred to by the Chairman as willing to contribute to help the party, were policy men, faro men, badger-house keepers, burglars and "crooked people" generally who contributed regularly, for their several industries had to be protected from interference. The police kept to their bargain, and "our friends" were willing to be liberal in case of emergency. They always came down handsomely at election times.

The fund was thought to be too large to hand out at once, and it was paid over to the Hon. Peter Skinnem in instalments. But the bill passed both houses in spite of Skinnem's efforts. There was tall swearing, and some insinuations which so wounded

Skinnem's feelings that he said he had a good mind to throw up the whole business, and he would if it were not that he didn't want to see the party suffer through any fault of his. He explained that he had it all fixed that certain men, who didn't dare vote against the bill, should quietly fix it up with the Governor, who was a reasonable man, and, being of their own party, would be disposed to do the right thing. The Governor was the last hope, and a last instalment of \$25,000 was handed over for that good man's use and benefit.

The Hon. Peter Skinnem had hardly got well out of the room when one of the committeemen remarked:

"This whole thing's snide. I don't believe Pete Skinnem has paid out a dollar, and I don't believe the Governor will ever see a nickel of that money. I sounded a sport from the Capital to-day, and he said he couldn't hear of any money being used up there on our bill. I'm in for getting that last lump back, and we all know the people to do it."

It was arranged that the money should be recovered. A committee-man sought Johnny Hopeful, a notorious operator, and told him the situation.

"Now lay for him and give him the collar somewhere between here and there. Shadow him, and get him dead to rights when you pull for him. Take Billy, the Burglar, along, and bring back that money!"

"Do you want him finished up, Cap'n?"

"Johnny, don't let us have a crime in the papers if you can help it—but get the money."

Thus the delicate matter was arranged, and the thing could have been done if one of the men had not, for some reason, weakened. The Hon. Peter Skinnem got away with his life, and, what was of equal value to him, his cash.

Let a venerable member, and long a conspicuous figure in the Legislature, relate how Pete Skinnem went to work on the Governor.

"I was against the bill on principle, and I did all I could against it in the branch of which I was a member. I didn't know that money was being used, and I was not surprised at the active part Pete was taking, because he was looking out for his party. And so I wasn't surprised when he called on me to get me to go and see the Governor. He reminded me that if it was known that he had been to see the Governor, improper motives would at once be suspected, and that would hurt the cause, and bring the press of the Governor's party down on the honored Executive. I consented, and having occasion to stay at the Capital over Sunday, I called to see the Governor in the evening. I was as eloquent with him as I knew how to be, and I subsequently discovered that my zeal laid me open to suspicion. As I was leaving, imagine my surprise to run against Pete Skinnem, gliding in the door. I didn't know what to say, and I said nothing. But I thought I had been put in a trap,

and I knew that something beside high principle was being pressed on the man who always boasted of his honesty, while presiding over a great Commonwealth."

The bill was vetoed, and the policemen thought there was some good in Pete Skinner, after all. It was always surmised that Pete staked himself for life out of that job, and some people have gone so far as to say that he didn't lay out a dollar of the pile.

As showing how fine Pete could work it, when the occasion called up all his powers, his method of handling a certain member, in the matter of a bill of great importance, may be instanced. It was ascertained, by careful counting of noses, that there was a majority of but one in favor of the bill, and it became painfully apparent to the promoters of the measure, that one of the honorable members was being tampered with by the opposition. This member had accepted a promise of \$10,000 for his vote, and the advocates of the bill made up their minds that a higher figure would have to be promised. But one promise was as much as the honorable gentleman thought he could handle, and he suggested that there might be a way to make the bargain more binding all around. He wanted the substantive thing placed subject to his call at the end of the session, a plan which had had a long run, and was stamped with the approbation of high authority as being perfectly fair to both contracting parties. It was all arranged, and just here

the Hon. Peter Skinnem's versatility came into play. Mr. Smart and a colleague were intrusted with the delicate task of seting the thing through. Pete worked his cards so that he would be asked to witness the delivery as the member's next friend. In Mr. Smart's room they met, and there a dozen \$1,000 bills were placed in an envelope before the assembled eyes. Pete demanded one of the notes as an earnest that the thing was all right, and the remaining eleven were sealed up in the envelope, which was indorsed, "To be delivered to the Hon. — — — at the close of the session." Then they hied them to a bank in the vicinity where the package was placed on deposit. The honorable member voted for the bill. The moment the Speaker's gavel fell to declare the adjournment of the session, the honorable member struck out for the bank and received the package, broke it open, and found to his indescribable disgust that it was only a "boodle,"—eleven slips of waste paper. The only man who got anything out of that little transaction was the Hon. Peter Skinnem, who had gone in "Solid for Cash."

But that Peter Skinnem had a soft place in his head for the unfortunate and the oppressed was evident from his untiring efforts to put through a bill giving the Supreme Court the power to review the evidence as well as the law in capital cases. While the bill was general in its nature, it was special in its application. A murderer, who had earned the halter, was

under sentence of death. The court of last resort had passed judgment upon the law, and the gallows stared the wretch in the face. A great deal of misplaced sympathy was excited in his behalf. It was thought by many that the evidence did not warrant the verdict, and the only hope was to get the evidence reviewed. A desperate effort to pass the bill seemed about to end in failure, when up jumped the Hon. Peter Skinnem, all eyes riveted on him, and asked leave to have a letter read, as his speech. The letter purported to have been written by the wife of a man who had suffered death on the gallows for a crime of which he was innocent. The effect was electrical. The shot went to the hearts of members, the bill passed, a good law went on the statute books at a bad time, and as hardened a criminal as ever landed from a foreign shore was let loose upon society. When the thing had blown over, Pete admitted—but “not for publication”—that he wasn’t so much for the murderer in that affair as he was “Solid for Cash.”

The Hon. Peter Skinnem operated on the theory that “half a loaf is better than no bread.” He used to say, “When you see a big rake, nail it; but never throw a thing over your shoulder because it’s small—maybe it’ll grow if you look into and nurse it.” Being intrusted with the purchase of a present for the Speaker at the adjournment—time-honored custom—he shared a very handsome commission for his

trouble. He put through an appropriation for a charitable institution, with the understanding that one-half of the amount was to be devoted to "necessary expenses." He engineered a bill "pinching" some of his own constituents, and, perhaps, distant kinsmen, who do business under the sign of the three balls. Always and everywhere he was "Solid for Cash!"



A DEFEATED CANDIDATE.

X.

BIG CITY POLITICS.

Wherein of the General Awakening, and How Various Interests Looked at it.

I feel a catastrophe coming;
This epoch will soon be done.

WHILE the Hon. Peter Skinnem was winning fame and fortune at the State Capital, there was no lack of similar activity in the city politics. The City Fathers dealt out thousands where the Legislature spent dollars. In the city it was not a question of "squeezing" some interest with a single bill—a whole great community with its vast and manifold interests was being openly and boldly plundered, and the people didn't see it. They knew that taxes were running up—the rate was put higher and the valuation was steadily increased. The city debt had reached fabulous proportions. Landlords saw their net incomes decreasing, and tenants found their rents going up. Millions were spent to increase the water supply, and the expenditure only increased the debt. The Department of Breadstuffs became daily more exacting and oppressive. Highways were opened and paved
(80)

through fields and truck-patches, and this was one of the prettiest of all the games. Contractors got paving jobs by presenting receipted bills to enough property-holders to make a majority in feet of the private property, and so show that the citizens most interested were anxious for the so-called improvement; and, by a judicious system of "divvies" with the City Fathers and other Bosses, obtained authority to charge such a price per yard as left a handsome thing after the work was done and the bribes paid. Streets were paved before the sewers were put in, for the express purpose of tearing up the paving and putting it down again. Passenger railway companies were given *carte blanche* to do what they pleased with the streets, for the Bosses had railway stock which cost them very little or absolutely nothing. Bridges were built at princely cost which tumbled down almost before the contractors could get out of the way. The Department for Collecting Taxes was run by a Syndicate which was forever securing new laws to distress the people and add to the emoluments of the office, which were finally worked up to about \$300,000 a year. All the offices of large revenue were pooled and the Bosses shared the proceeds, each according to his stature as a Boss, the biggest Boss getting the biggest pull.

There arose up at this time a sect called Reformers —men who came out from the two organized parties filled with a grave suspicion that there was some-

thing wrong, and imbued with the insane idea that the Bosses could be overthrown and the Boss system wiped out of existence. The Reformers were men of high standing in the community, some of them rich, and all of them respectable. They issued addresses to the people exhorting them to rise and drive off the plunderers before the plunderers ran off with the city. They did a great deal of figuring to show that taxes were out of all proportion to the necessities of honest government. They found out that no Boss paid any taxes, and they said : "Behold, fellow-citizens, these men rob us to enrich themselves, and bear none of the burdens of government! How long shall they abuse our patience? Are we slaves, that we must submit to these things? or cowards, that we dare not rise up against them? Have we none of the spirit of '76 which threw the tea-chests into the sea and won freedom from a Boss who ruled by real power, not by rank impudence?"

The Reformers put out their passionate appeals at public meetings, in circulars, in the newspapers, in great flaring full-sheet posters, headed:

RALLY! CITIZENS!

RALLY TO SAVE YOUR HOMES!

STRIKE FOR YOUR ALTARS AND YOUR FIRES!

They fanned a spark which was just beginning to glow, and they raised a very respectable flame with a vast amount of smoke.

There were citizens who agreed that what the Reformers wanted to be done ought to be done, and done at once, but they said it couldn't be done, and that is what the Bosses said. Of the citizens who wanted reform and stood aloof from active participation in the movement, the greater part said: "By all means let us have reform. We can't think of anything we need more. But let us have reform within the party—don't go outside of our great and glorious organization to find honest men. That would be an unwarranted reflection. We have seen something of the other party in office, and we don't want to be ruled by the criminal classes."

The Bosses liked this better, and they said that nobody should be more active than they in forwarding reform within the party. They were free to admit that some things had been done in the name of the party which ought not to have been done, and it was possible that some things had been left undone which ought to have been done. But still there was a great deal of good health in the party, and if complete harmony could be restored there was no earthly reason why things shouldn't run on smoothly as they had done before a few bad men had betrayed the confidence reposed in them, and before a lot of disappointed office-seekers and chronic sore-heads had caused such defection in the ranks.

The good citizens who didn't want to go outside of the party for their reform were charmed by this

frank avowal and manly pledge, and they couldn't help enjoying the blunt humor of the slap at the Reformers who had kicked out of the traces.

Three municipal offices of great importance were to be filled, and City Fathers were to be chosen. Long before the delegate elections were held it was understood that the Bosses had settled on the nominees, and it was equally well understood that the will of the Bosses was equivalent to *Le Roi le veut*. The Reformers set up a mighty howl that filled the city. The Bosses said it would die out. The newspapers that had the reform fever jumped on the slate and pounded it with their heels. The most advanced pulpits mildly hinted that evil counsels were about to prevail once more, and that the health of the body politic was in danger. The good people who were walking about with their forms bowed and microscopes to their eyes, looking for reform within the party, said the Bosses had given fair promises, and it was only right to wait and give them a chance.

The Bosses smiled serenely, but their hearts were troubled. Once or twice before they had made mistakes, and the people had slapped them in the face. One very notorious Boss, who had made an unsavory record as a City Father, made a dash for the Sheriff's office only three years before, and the people ran over him. The Bosses took counsel, on the eve of the conventions, in the little back room of the Department of Breadstuffs, which little back room was the

holy of holies wherein the Big Boss held court. They were reluctantly forced to agree that the two most obnoxious names on the slate would have to be wiped off, and the most obnoxious ones said, Yes, it looked so, and they didn't want to run and slip up, but it seemed hard that they couldn't get another shot at the rewards of party service. The most obnoxious one of the most obnoxious two wanted to be Sheriff, because it paid to be Sheriff. He had made two or three fortunes out of the city, but he swore that he spent it all for the party and was poor—a very common plea with men of his class.

One of the brightest of the Bosses said, "Here's the racket. Let's give 'em 'the Mask of Reform'; it needn't be laid on too thick—just thick enough—for this is only reform within the party."

The thought was branded "good enough," and on the spot they rehearsed their parts in the original comedy of "The Mask of Reform."

The Boss organs got the cue, and the next day they expressed varying degrees of pleasure to know that the honored fellow-citizens who were sacrificing their time and talents to the public service, and in whose hands the party had almost uniformly triumphed, were determined to take no part whatever in the coming nominations. They were further pleased to hear that the well-known citizen who was the choice of the party for Sheriff would in all probability decline the nomination.

The newspapers which favored reform and the Reformers, said the slate had been smashed by public opinion, and that the Bosses would stand watching, for they were working a game.

There was a very able man, a distinguished lawyer, and a rattling stump-speaker in the party, by name the Hon. Benjamin Harris, who had shown troublesome symptoms very near akin to the reform fever. His character was above reproach, and the Bosses had borrowed it on several occasions to help them out of tight places. The Mayor of the city, himself an accomplished Boss, had acknowledged his indebtedness to Mr. Harris for pulling him through, and had suggested several public posts which his benefactor might fill. It was thought advisable this time to give Mr. Harris the nomination for an office in the line of his profession, providing satisfactory arrangements could be made with him. The nomination would make him solid for the Bosses, and if the people defeated him, he couldn't blame the Bosses.

Three ex-Sheriffs, the notorious City Father who had been beaten when he wanted to be Sheriff, the distinguished fellow-citizen who had been slated this time for Sheriff and was about to withdraw, and several smaller Bosses waited on the Hon. Benjamin Harris to tender him the nomination.

Mr. Harris didn't know. On the whole, he didn't care about it.

But he must. The people were demanding a better

class of nominations, and it was his duty to accept. Just one word more—would he pledge himself, if elected, to make a certain man his chief assistant, and would he make war on the Mayor?

"Make war on the Mayor!" exclaimed Mr. Harris, rising to his feet. "Make war on the Mayor—why should I? He is my friend, and I thought he was yours. I think he would be glad to see me in the office. If I promise you to make war on him, how do you know that I wouldn't promise him to strike you? I'll promise no such thing, and I'll not promise to appoint any particular man. I won't make any pledges at all!"

"Then you can't have the nomination, though we'd like to give it to you."

"I wouldn't have it subject to any such disgraceful conditions. And pray who are you that you can give or withhold, punish or reward? How dare you come here to insult me? Leave this place instantly."

One tarried behind—the notorious City Father—and he said in apology:

"There is no use of getting angry, Mr. Harris. The Big Boss offered me \$15,000 out of the Department for Collecting Taxes, but I didn't get mad; I just refused it."

They found a man on the Bench who would take their nomination. For Sheriff they nominated a dummy who represented the distinguished fellow-citizen, and was under bonds to be nothing more than

the Sheriff's chief clerk. They nominated for the third office a candidate who was so fiercely assailed that he had to be withdrawn, though his honesty was not questioned, and another man had to be put in his place—a good man who had very little show, for the reform campaign was blazing, and it was particularly directed against the office for which he was running, namely, the office of City Book-Keeper. It was a Presidential year, and the Bosses, being of the Majority party, called on party men to go the whole ticket straight, lest a local defection might lose the party its President.

It happened that the Minority party had renominated for City Book-Keeper a man who had made such a book-keeper as the city had not had for years. He struck at wrongs right and left, sparing not even his own party. For this he was violently opposed by the Minority ring, though the opposition was quietly conducted. The Majority Bosses were very anxious that the good City Book-Keeper should not be renominated, and the Reformers were quite as desirous that he should be.

The Bosses sent for the Hon. Peter Skinnem, of the Minority, and to him they said :

“ Pete, how do you stand in this fight ? ”

And Pete replied as aforetime :

“ Solid for Cash.”

“ That suits us. We'll make it satisfactory.”

“ In advance ? ”

"In advance."

The Bosses sought Bill Bigfin, also of the Minority, a City Father, a leader of men and of great influence withal. With him also they fixed it up, rather for places for his dependents than for a sordid consideration. But the Minority Bosses couldn't work it.

The Reformers and the good men of the Minority elected the good City Book-keeper; they defeated the Judge whom the Bosses had invited off the Bench into another office; but the dummy slipt into the Sheriff's office, and the proceeds for the whole term were divided with the distinguished fellow-citizen who declined the nomination. A near relative of the Mayor was put in as deputy, to show that his father had no interest in the pool.



THE HON. SEPTIMUS SENILE.

XI.

DANGER AHEAD.

*Wherein of What Struck the Bosses and Gave the People
Hope.*

Ring, O bells,
Every stroke exulting tells
Of the burial-hour of crime.

THE Reformers were greatly encouraged by the result of the election, and they set to work at once to prepare for another election but three months off. Many of the good people who had gone around with microscopes looking for reform within the party, having failed to find it, concluded that perhaps after all there wasn't any reform within the party. The Reformers, being presumably the best men in both parties, or at least the men with the clearest vision, formed a very large committee to take general charge of the movement. To the general surprise only Majority men were admitted to that committee, and thousands of the friends of reform felt that the movement had been killed in the house of its friends. The Mayor had been in office so long that he didn't know how to do anything else but be Mayor and grow

richer every year, and he and all the Bosses thought it would be rank ingratitude to put him out. The corporations and a considerable part of the speculating interest were of the same opinion. The Mayor's friends had the assurance to press him upon the Committee as a Reformer, and again, to the general surprise, the Committee accepted him at the bogus valuation, and put him to the regular Majority convention as the choicest flower that bloomed in the garden of reform. With him also they presented two Simon-pure Reformers who had proved their faith by their works.

The bogus Reform candidate for Mayor packed his convention with his policemen, strikers and stuffers; and the opposing candidate, who was not a ring candidate, and who was the choice of the best men who still refused to look outside the party for reform, hadn't the ghost of a show. The other suggestions of the Reform Committee were laughed at, and the Bosses made nominees to suit themselves. There was a quietly interesting time in the convention to nominate a candidate to administer the Department for Collecting Taxes. A man who held a city office, and had many friends among the workers and in the party generally, had made such a spurt for the nomination that nobody thought it worth while to oppose him, because to his own strength he added the favor of the Bosses. The notorious City Father was his close friend, and the impression got out that the man who

really was after the most lucrative part of the Tax Department was this same City Father. The officious newspapers struck in again, and the candidate who was after the nomination was flattened out. The newspapers were cursed with prodigal liberality, but that didn't mend matters. It was certain that the man who had carried the nomination could not defeat the able-bodied Reformer who was pitted against him. Again the Bosses resorted to the mask, and they took the convention away from the man who had worked it up, presenting it on a silver salver to the man whom they had selected because he hadn't been in politics, couldn't have carried his own division, but had a good name among those who knew him.

Now came another hitch. The Reformers wanted the Minority to indorse the Reform candidates, at the same time promising to take a first-class man, irrespective of party, for Mayor. This was what the Majority Bosses determined should not be done, and again they were obliged to go outside of the party for help. They said to the Hon. Peter Skinner:

"Pete, how are you now?"

"Solid for cash all the time."

"Good boy, Pete, stick to your principles. Now's your party's chance. You see we are divided, and h—l's to pay. You people nominate a straight ticket, help our candidate for Mayor as you did last time, and we'll elect your candidate for the Tax Office if



he'll listen to reason and give us a show. The people must be protected against these designing Reformers. Of course we'll take care of you as usual."

"How much is there in it this time?"

"\$——"

"In advance?"

"In advance."

"I'm with you right along."

Bill Bigfin was equally accommodating, for more places for his heelers. Thus the lines were laid, in the most harmonious and non-partisan way, for a straight party ticket and a division of the spoils irrespective of party.

When the Hon. Peter Skinnem was running with the Plug-Uglies, there was a fellow-member of marvellous activity who did the heavy business to the admiration of the company and the terror of the community. This man was Peter Rundle Young, also known as Peter Young Rundle. While Skinnem was going ahead in his public career, Rundle Young, or Young Rundle, was not standing still. Skinnem had pulled him along, for he was handy to have about in a skirmish. In his younger days he liked nothing better than to start a fire for the fun of a fight with the Neckers, on which occasion half a dozen men usually were laid out for a week or two of hospital service. He was always willing to take the chances of swinging off on a rope's end, but he was never known to shoot a man above the knee,

except once, and that happened in this way : He was lying flat on the pavement waiting for his victim, who was to be popped over for reasons of State, when bang ! went the pistol, and the bullet killed the wrong man. The man for whom the ball was intended knew who pulled the trigger that exploded the cap, that set off the powder that started the bullet, and yet it was never judicially ascertained who fired that shot. But politicians are magnanimous even to the other side, and Rundle Young, or Young Rundle, was such a handy man to help to make or prevent a " bolt " in a convention, and so very useful to run a gang of repeaters for either party, that he could not well be spared. This time he was wanted to prevent a bolt, and Skinnem engaged him.

The Tax Convention met, and there was a strong sentiment in favor of the Reform candidate. Skinnem was on hand, bland, plausible, wearing his accustomed smile and his blazing diamond pin. He was everywhere at once, button-holing delegates and shouting for a straight-out nomination. Peter Rundle Young, or Peter Young Rundle, was also on hand, with his decks cleared for action. Bill Bigfin was buying out all the bar-rooms in the neighborhood, and giving the boys a picnic, to hold the party together and preserve its proud escutcheon unsullied by the suspicion of barter with any party or faction.

The Hon. Septimus Senile was also there—suave, courtly, fluent, fiery, uncompromising. He took his

stand where he had stood for something like half a century, in office and out of office, in victory or defeat. The party never had made anything by following strange gods, and he begged, he implored, on his knees he besought, delegates to stand firm and go down with the good old ship if need be. But the ship would not go down—by the gods it should not! There was smooth water ahead, and the sheltering harbor of the Tax Office was not far off, and the crew would come in for the prize-money.

It was nip and tuck between applause and hisses, but the applause had rather the better of it. A consumptive delegate, who persisted in shouting reform and hurrahing for the Reform candidate, was lifted out the window by Rundle Young, and quiet was restored.

The Hon. Peter Skinnem, who but an hour before had left the Majority Bosses, with his cash in his pocket, arose and delivered a touching panegyric on his old friend, Mr. Robert O'Hay, whom he hoped the convention would have the wisdom to nominate. Becoming dramatic, he flung to the breeze a long list of names calling on Mr. O'Hay to serve, and with that ensign lifted on high, while he clutched the Bosses' cash in his pocket, he hurled the *anathema maranatha* against any man who would be base enough to desert his party at this time, when victory was within reach. He had heard that money was to be used in this convention to prevent a straight-out

nomination, and he wanted to see the man who would confess it by his vote or by bolting the convention.

Mr. O'Hay was put through by a close shave, and the opposition bolted to the Reformers.

"Let 'em go!" yelled Skinnem. "Let 'em go, — — —, they've been bought, every d—n one of 'em, and I ain't afraid to charge it on the floor of this convention."

The Minority men unexpectedly put up a real Reformer for Mayor, the Reform Committee indorses him, and the Reform campaign starts with an impetus that frightens the Bosses. The police are struck for a month's pay, and the gamblers have to contribute as usual. The Tax Office Syndicate doesn't know what to do. To be sure its party is in power in the Legislature, and if the Reformers capture the office the Legislature can strip it bare. Now let us see what long-headed fellows they were in the Tax Office. In anticipation of trouble they had looked ahead at the preceding election, and concluded that they must choose a man of their own on the spot and inside.

The legal adviser of the corrupt city department was thought to be the right man for the place. He lived in a district which was owned by a Boss in sympathy with the guardians of the Tax Department, and who had his heart set on slipping into it himself at the back door. Nothing would suit him so well, and he fixed it up for the counsellor. This was very easy,

for he had only to retire one creature and command some other to do his bidding.

The counsellor is elected. There is no trouble about that. He resigns his position as legal adviser to the Tax city department, for it wouldn't look well to stay there, notwithstanding his unsullied reputation. In recognition of this delicacy the corrupt Tax Department appoints to the vacancy the law-partner of the Representative-elect. The Legislature convenes. The Speaker of the House, by the merest accident, places the Representative at the head of the committee before which must come any bill to affect the corrupt city department. Such a bill is offered. It is supposed to go to the appropriate committee. The member who offered the bill rises to call it up. The point is made that the bill has not been before the committee as required by the rule. The father of the bill protests. He fancies that there may be something wrong in it all. The Chairman resents the imputation. The Speaker wants it understood that he won't have the Chair insulted.

And there the bill hangs, to be smothered if the non-partisan combination of bosses wins, to be pushed if the Reformers win. There never was anything more beautifully adjusted to the necessities of the hour.

The Hon. Peter Skinnem is retained to watch the bill in a non-partisan way.

